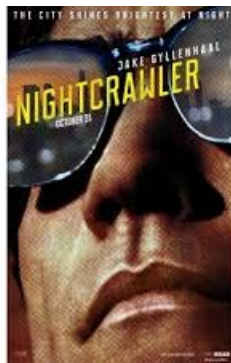


NIGHTCRAWLER

By Lorraine Viade, PsyD



Nightcrawler is a film that is bound to get under your skin. Jake Gyllenhaal has transformed himself into one of the sleaziest characters I have seen in a long time. He brings a determined desperation to the role of an ambulance-chasing freelancer whose desire to be first on the scene fuels his pathology. Yikes! *Nightcrawler* will have you looking at the news in a very different manner. “If it bleeds, it leads” is a phrase commonly used to describe what has now become the focus of many a newscast. But just how is that footage obtained and what will a person do to get the exclusive? *Nightcrawler* has the answers. While I am sure that there are many decent and responsible people in the industry, I would not be surprised to learn that there was more fact than fiction in the depiction of this bottom-feeder.

In the persona of Lou Bloom, Gyllenhaal gives us the full range of sociopathy. His dogged pursuit of recognition at any cost evolves from the moment he discovers that people will pay to watch bad things happen. Lou Bloom then figures out a way to work the system to his advantage in ways that are so amoral and disturbing that you can’t help but keep watching. That is the whole point of this film. We keep watching. Hooked by the voyeuristic nature of this film, you will question yourself as to who is actually making the news out there? In an age where everyone can record anything at any time, those who do it professionally have a lot of pressure to produce the next big story but at what cost?

We have seen what happens when the paparazzi do not cease their relentless pursuit of celebrities in the tragic death of Princess Diana. But in the everyday tragic death toll, how many scenes may have been staged just for our prurient interests. The lines between news and entertainment continue to blur and *Nightcrawler* is a clear indictment of the darker side of the world of nightly news. While Lou Bloom may take us to the extreme, it is a place where we may need to go to fully understand the dangers of letting anyone who has footage barter for a place in between commercials.

Ratings rule the day and night and without some ethics to guide us, we are all subject to being preyed upon by the wrong people doing the wrong thing for the wrong reasons. For me, there is nothing to be gained by showing someone die in an accident or being shot by the police. And yet, every time there is a high-speed chase, people stop to look as though their eyes could change the outcome. If we didn't look, they wouldn't show it. Let *Nightcrawler* remind you that we need to guard ourselves from valuing sensationalism to the point where we might even manufacture it to suit our own purposes. Jake Gyllenhaal gives an outstanding performance that is well worth taking a walk on the dark side.

I give *Nightcrawler* four guys with cameras.

